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THE MADERA COUNTY HISTORIAN

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THE STORY OF RAYMOND
Madera County, California
By Eva Burns Lyons

The town of Raymond, 1912-13, looking north. At far left is the little white building which was the first school, and at far right is one of the hotels.

Raymond was a late-comer among hill country towns and settlements, and was born all of a sudden, because of a wet winter. The wet winter caused a railroad to be built; the railroad ended here, and Raymond grew at the terminus.

The transcontinental railroad had been completed in 1869, and by 1872 the Southern Pacific Company had built the San Joaquin Valley line as far south as Goshen. The Yosemite Act of 1864 had created the first state park in the nation at Yosemite Valley.

As soon as the railroad was built, tourists began to flock in to see "the Yosemite," which had been publicized by John Muir and others. A hill country road led from the railroad out through what is now Eastern Madera County, via Buchanan and Clark's Station (Wawona.) This, with variations, was the main route for travel to Yosemite from 1872 until 1907, when a railroad from Merced to Yosemite was completed. The All-Year Highway

from Merced to Yosemite was opened in 1926, and Highway 41, out of Fresno, came several years later.

Buchanan, which was connected to Mariposa by a horsedrawn stage line, was the hill country metropolis of this area before Raymond was born. The exact date of the Buchanan settlement is hard to pin down; but in 1863 there was a copper smelter there, and the town was shipping copper in large quantities.

The wet winter of 1885-1886 caused the birth of Raymond, and, indirectly, the demise of the town of Buchanan. As Raymond grew, Buchanan died, partly because of a drop in copper prices and demand, and partly because the new town usurped its trade.

The Washburn brothers had bought Clark's Station (Wawona) from Galen Clark, and were promoting the Yosemite tourist trade. The heavy rains were making the flatlands an impassable sea of mud, and they feared the horsedrawn stages would bog down when the tourist season opened in the spring.

The problem was solved by building a railroad branch line from Berenda, twenty three miles up into the hills, through Daulton Station. Where the railroad ended, Raymond grew.

The first train rolled into the station in March, 1886. Walter Bowen already had set up a big tent hotel for the tourists, and the Yosemite Stage and Turnpike Company, owned by the Washburns, had begun building homes for the stage drivers and corrals and barns for the horses. Within two years, the company had built a hotel.

One of the stories told by oldtimers about Bowen's tent hotel is that so many people came in on the train that they ran out of meat, and some of the tourists were fed wildcat meat. The town was called "Wildcat Station" by local residents for that reason, and many old residents still remember the name.

How the town came to be christened Raymond is a matter of some conjecture, but it seems more or less evident that it was named for Israel Ward Raymond, who worked with Jessie Benton Fremont (wife of John C.) to get the Yosemite Valley set aside as a park, instead of being open to homesteaders.

This man is described as a "shipping magnate" in "Yosemite, Saga of A Century," compiled by John C. Preston, a superintendent of Yosemite National Park. In an old article by A. C. Shaw in The Tattler, a Raymond High School newspaper, the town is said to be named for "Mr. Raymond, of the Raymond-Whitcomb Travel Agency." Whether these two are the same man is a good question, but it is likely that they are. The name was conferred on the town by the railroad company (the San Joaquin Valley and Yosemite Railroad, later a Southern Pacific Company branch.)

A new industry sprang up immediately when the railroad came into Raymond - the cutting and shipping of firewood. (For, of course, in those days, houses were heated and food was cooked by means of wood fires.)

Charles Miller, the first station agent for the railroad, took up a homestead, plotted a townsite, and began to sell lots. Later, A. R. (Sandy) Stevens homesteaded 160 acres on the north side and adjoining Miller's holdings, and laid out four more blocks of townsite.

Walter Bowen built a store and a hotel, and was the first postmaster.

Thomas (Tom) Leonard and Robert Maxwell built a general store, a hotel, a saloon and a livery stable. Leonard served as a constable for many long years.

In 1887, a year after the railroad arrived, a Rev. Frickstadt built the first church, an Episcopalian church, on Miller Avenue. A Presbyterian church was built in 1894, and the building is still used by the Raymond Community Church.

Raymond's First Church

The first school was erected on the west side of Miller Avenue, between School and Harrison Streets. A Miss Judson was the first teacher, and the pupils were Sterling and Will Phillips and their sisters; May Potter; Hattie Hildreth; Julius, Caesar and Beatrice Vignolo; and Norman, Annie, Tony and Lacy Foster.

In 1900, a new elementary school was built on a hill at the south edge of the town, and the old elementary school became a high school. A new high school was erected in 1924, and continued in use until Raymond joined the Sierra High School District. The building still stands.

In 1891, Millard Shaw took over a feed yard started by his father, C. W. Shaw, and

added a grocery store. S. R. Frizelle was a partner in this enterprise. In 1915, they sold to David Dapelo, who built the granite store building on the main street (Yosemite Avenue) in 1918. Dapelo previously had also been a partner of Nelson Luke in Luke and Dapelo's Store, which became Luke's General Merchandise, and is now, in 1972, Shull's Store. The Dapelo granite store building was gutted by fire in the 1930's, but the ruins still stand.

Other early day shops included a blacksmith shop run by Charles Tann and John Vignolo; saloons owned by Billie Fields and Sam Ryan, and a boarding house run by "Grandma and Grandpa Skelton." The latter became a hotel, then an apartment house, and is still here. At Shull's Store, one may read the old hotel register.

In 1910, John C. Krohn and S. M. Koontz opened a meat market. Dare Lewis previously had a butcher shop in Raymond, and there had been a Phillip's Store. Herman Rost's ice house and feed store opened in 1907.

Koontz and Krohn Meat Market

The first doctor, a Dr. Church, established a practice in Raymond in 1893. He was followed by Dr. Schuer, Dr. Topp, Dr. Davis, Dr. Mayers and Dr. Burch, then Dr. Topp again for a time, before Dr. John Allen and Mrs. Allen, both doctors, came. The Allens were the hill country doctors of the area for many years. Both died here.

The Raymond postmasters, in order of service, were: Walter Bowen, Mason Bowen, John Wood, A. C. Shaw, William Murray, Everett Philp (Sr.), David Dapelo, J. C. Smale, Claire Smale, Mary Dunnigan, Dorothy Noble, Vera Lollich, Butler Ferrier, and the present postmaster, Regina Harlow.

Many famous people traveled to Yosemite by the old Madera County route. Ulysses Simpson Grant, who came by the old dirt road before the railroad was built, and two years after his term as President of the United States, travelled through here in 1879. Of course, that was before Raymond existed.

When the President of the United States, Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt, came in May of 1903, Raymond welcomed him with a brass band and 1500 people. Some oldtimers still remember shaking hands with the President. A. C. Shaw, writing in the old Raymond Tattler, said he was on the reception committee, and that Teddy made one of his few speaking stops in Raymond. He was accompanied by John Muir.

The old railroad ran two trains a day, loaded with tourists. Although it was born on a wave of Yosemite tourist trade, Raymond soon had many other reasons for its existence, and these have kept the town alive after newer tourist routes bypassed it. They were the other industries of this area, some of which still exist.

Contrary to the opinions expressed by many "flatland" journalists, the hills were NOT settled by escapees from valley towns. When the hills were settled, there were no valley towns. The hills were settled FIRST, in the 1850's (even the 1840's in some areas.) The old Millerton Road, California's first long north-south inland highway, came through Eastern Madera County (only it was not Madera County then) on its winding route from Stockton to Millerton to Visalia. The first settlers established their towns and settlements along or near this road. The ancestors of many Raymondites lived in the hills when the San Joaquin Valley was considered a desert, unfit for human habitation. Some came to California while it was Mexican territory.

One of the chief industries which has kept the town of Raymond alive is the raising of beef, which has been continuous since the 1850's.

More spectacular is the production of granite. Before the railroad was built, Luke David filed on a homestead, mainly to get possession of a good spring of water. The rest of his property was a rockpile. Frank Dusy (or Ducy), a Fresno County contractor, saw the possibility of quarrying granite, and bought some of David's rockpile soon after the railroad was completed. He later sold to F. E. Knowles. A spur track was built to the Knowles quarry, now the site of the Raymond Granite Company, two miles east of Raymond. Raymond granite has been used for many beautiful buildings, including several in the San Francisco Civic Center.

The lumbering industry built a 55 mile flume from Soquel Mills in the mountains to the Madera townsite in 1876, and the town of Madera grew up around the sawmill there. Heavy timbers floated down the flume, but supplies for the timber camps in the mountains were shipped by train through Raymond, and hauled up by teams. Some lumbering still continues.

Gold and copper mines shipped out ore and shipped in supplies by means of the railroad.

Raymond has had its ups and downs, its times of prosperity and its reverses, but it is still surrounded by cattle ranches, and the Raymond Granite Company is quarrying granite. Ranchers and granite workers need such things as schools, churches, post-offices and stores. So, although gold mines and railroads are only memories, and the tourist trade has passed it by, Raymond survives.

A few tourists still take a roundabout drive and stop here. They look at the old Fresno County Jail (Madera County was formed in 1893), and the excavation where the old

turnstile stood, which turned the train's engine around, and they ask questions about the old hotels (which have burned.)

Raymond is a sleepy little town, with one store, a postoffice, a school, a flock of little houses, and dreams of past grandeur.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1. Winchell, Lilbourne Alsip - History of Fresno and Madera Counties.

2. Bureau of Mines.

3. Shaw, A. C. - article in the Raymond Tattler, 1933.

4. Preston, John C. - Yosemite, Saga Of A Century.

5. Krohn, Karl, who allowed use of old pictures from his collection.

6. Many neighbors and friends who have generously supplied information about the hill country from their own family records.

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FREDERICK ERWIN KNOWLES

(We have received inquiries as to the beginning of Knowles, and since it is next door to Raymond, we include this small story.)

Mr. Frederick Erwin Knowles, the founder of Knowles, California and the beginner of the Knowles Granite Quarry, was born in Northport, Maine on January 29, 1853.

In 1887, he came to Oakland, California and engaged in the stone cutting business, taking as his partner, Mr. Abel Hosmer. They established a plant in San Francisco.

In 1888, Knowles and Hosmer received a contract to furnish stone for the First National Bank of San Francisco. They looked around for a quarry and finally found the granite at what is today known as Knowles. At first, they hauled the granite out to the main branch line at Raymond. This proved to be too costly, so in the Fall of 1889 the Raymond Granite Company built a "spur" track of $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the quarry to the main branch line at a cost of $25,000.

When the "spur" was finished, a party of Southern Pacific officials, including the late Henry E. Huntington, nephew of Collis P. Huntington, one of the builders of the Southern Pacific Company, came to inspect the "spur." Mr. Huntington suggested that the railroad be called the "Knowles Spur," and the settlement there to be named "Knowles."

The first 10 carloads of granite shipped over this railroad was for the Barton Opera House in Fresno, California.

Mr. Knowles built a school house in 1891 and paid the first teacher himself. Her name was Mrs. James Littlefield. As the community grew, they needed another room for the school. In 1892, Fresno County took over the school, and in 1893, the district became a part of Madera County. In 1920, a larger building was erected - this one was of granite blocks.

Many important buildings in California, and out of State also, were constructed from the granite from the quarries. To list them would take more space than we have available in this issue of the Historian.

(This information was secured from the "Story of Knowles," written in 1935 by Mrs. Eva Cadenazzi, Principal and teacher at Knowles.)

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CHASED UP TREE BY A BEAR
(From a newspaper clipping in the early 1900's)

Mr. A. C. Shaw, the leading merchant of Raymond, who recently returned from Yosemite, tells a good story which has the laugh on Frank Barnett, who is well-known in Madera. It seems that bears are more than plentiful, and that one day last week a mother bear and her cub came right up to the big livery barn at Yosemite, and some of the boys decided to capture the cub and keep him for a pet. While the mother bear was sunning herself on a nearby rock the boys, including Barnett, "sneaked" up to the cub, but were not quick enough and the little brown fellow climbed up a tree. Barnett was selected to climb up after the cub and bring him down. In the meantime, the mother bear had taken in the situation, and when Barnett was up in the tree she started up after him. The cub, Barnett and the mother bear then gave an exhibition in the art of climbing, and each one tried to outdo the other. Barnett "beat" the cub bear to it, and when he was within reach he gave the little fellow a push that sent him sprawling to the ground. This

seemed to satisfy the mother, who quit climbing up after Barnett, who by this time was barely hanging to a small limb and about ready to drop to the ground himself. The mother climbed down and glad to get her "cheeild" back started off on a dog trot and was soon lost to sight in the nearby brush.

GIFTS TO SOCIETY'S COLLECTIONS

The Madera County Library has given us about 100 books (we are processing them now.) Many are very old. One especially we will mention: "Godeys Lady's Book - 1855 - 574 pages. This is really a most valuable book and a rare edition.

Mrs. Myrtle Mills Fick presented:

Photo - Gambetta School - 1887-88, near Grub Gulch - students identified.

Bag - alligator - used by father of Mrs. Fick who carried gold in it to San Francisco.

Trumpet - used in Grub Gulch Band in 1885.

INQUIRIES RECEIVED

Mrs. Charles C. Pace has written inquiring about Garland A. Dabney and his wife, Roxanna. If anyone has knowledge of the Dabney family, please contact the Historical Society at the address given on this page.

We received an inquiry asking about Mr. Thomas J. Murray, who patented a miner's candlestick, August 11, 1896. He lived at Grub Gulch. They want any information on him, as a book is being written on Hardrock Miner's Candlesticks. He was one of 9 men who patented them in California.

REMINDER

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES FOR 1972? They will be delinquent on July 1. Please make dues payable to the Madera County Historical Society, P. O. Box 478, Madera, Calif. 93637

GUEST WRITER

We appreciate having Mrs. Eva Lyons as our guest contributor for this issue. We wi[illegible] to have more stories by members and friends. If you have a story to tell, please contact us.

We hope to have the story of the Hensley family by next issue.

("A SPACE FILLERUPPER")

How often the thought comes home to me,
As the moments hurry away,
Of the many things I intend to do
Somehow, some time, some day.
There are promises that have not been kept,
Though I always meant to be true,
But time is too short for all the things
That a body intends to do.

I will answer a letter, or read a book,
I will write a bit of rhyme;
I will do the things that I ought to do,
Some day when I have the time.
So I look beyond, as I hope and plan
For the days that are just ahead,
While the day that is here goes into the grave
With its opportunities dead.

Today is the only day we have,
Of tomorrow we can't be sure;
To seize the chance as it comes along
Is the way to make it secure.
For every year is a shorter year,
And this is a truth sublime;
A moment misspent is a jewel lost
From the treasury of time.

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